

Leviticus 24 - Thursday, March 25th, 2010

- In Leviticus chapter 24 we have the specific commands to the Israelites as it relates to the Tabernacle preparations and responsibilities.
- First we'll look at the lamp stand in the Holy Place then, we will look at the preparations for the bread on the Table of Showbread.
- Then we will see capital punishment meted out when a man is actually stoned to death for blaspheming the name of the Lord.

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. 3 Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually; it shall be a statute forever in your generations. 4 He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD continually.

- Here, the children of Israel were to bring pure olive oil to fill the seven lamps that were on the Lamp-stand located in the Holy Place.
- They were to keep the lamps filled with oil day and night, and have the wicks trimmed continually as the light source in the Tabernacle.
- This lamp stand is known as the "Menorah," and has quite a story behind it, which is celebrated in modern day Israel as "Hanukkah."

In the year 167 BC, the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes ruled over Israel. An old priest named Mattathias and his five sons retreated to the hills and battled against the Syrians and their Greek allies. Judah, the son of Mattathias, and his forces finally defeated the Syrian overlords and their Greek allies in 165 BC. The first goal of Judah and his followers, who were also known as the Maccabees, was to reclaim the temple. After cleaning the temple, they looked for oil to light the eternal flame that is always present in a Jewish house of worship. Unfortunately, they could only find enough oil to light the flame for one day. But when they lit the flame, a miracle happened! The oil lasted for eight days. Since that time Jews around the world have celebrated Hanukkah to commemorate this miracle. Hanukkah celebrations often involve exchanging small gifts, because Hanukkah occurs around Christmas, many people assume that gifts play a major role and that Hanukkah is a major holiday. But actually, the major Jewish holidays are Rosh ha-Shanah, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

- There's something else I want us to see before we move on to verse five. Notice that keeping the Menorah lit was a collective effort.
- In other words, it was Aaron's responsibility to keep the lamp burning, but it was the people's responsibility to keep the oil coming.
- Here's what I'm thinking; "the priest had to depend on the people to do their part in order for the light to stay lit there in the Tabernacle."

"Great preachers do not make great congregations, but rather great congregations make great preachers." Charles Spurgeon

5 "And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. 6 You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. 7 And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. 8 Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. 9 And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

- We now move to the Table of Showbread, which is interpreted as meaning "bread of the face," symbolic of breaking bread with God.
- This speaks of the continual fellowship God wanted with His people. It was to be fresh as a new relationship with the Lord continually.

The light of the candlestick and the twelve cakes of fine flour were to be before the Lord continually, as symbols of the twofold office his people were to sustain, on the one hand to the world's darkness, on the other to God Himself. We must shine as lights in the world. As a candle in the hand of the housewife, who sweeps her house diligently; as a lamp in the hand of the bride expecting the bridegroom; or as the lighthouse on a rocky coast. We must dispel the darkness, and guide wanderers through the murky night. ... The lamps of the pure candlestick of a holy life are not for man only, but for Him. But they can only be maintained through the constant supply of the pure oil of the Holy Spirit, ministered by Him who walks amid the seven golden candlesticks. ... The two rows of six cakes foreshadow the unity and order of the Church; the fine flour, its holy, equable character; the pure frankincense, the fragrance of Christian love. There is a testimony in all these to the world...

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

10 Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. 11 And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) 12 Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them.

- We sort of round a corner here as we now have recorded for us an incident that took place in the camp of the Israelites.
- What's interesting is that this must have been important enough and serious enough to warrant its inclusion here in the Word of God.

"We now read a brief incident, very terrible to think upon, and full of solemn teaching to us all. May the Holy Spirit enable us to profit by it. ... Among the people of God there are some who are not altogether of Israel, they are in heart Egyptians or lovers of sin, and yet they are near of kin, to true believers, and mingle freely in their gatherings. Observe that the words- 'of the Lord' are not in the original. He blasphemed The Name. Now there is given among us a name which is above every name, a name at which every knee shall bow, and woe shall be unto the man who shall lightly esteem the name of Jesus."

Charles Spurgeon

13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 14 "Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

- One may wonder if the punishment of death is disproportionate to the crime of blasphemy until you understand what it means.

BLASPHEME:

1. To speak of the Supreme Being in terms of impious irreverence; to revile or speak reproachfully of God, or the Holy Spirit.
2. To speak evil of; to utter abuse; to speak reproachfully of.

BLASPHEMOUSLY:

1. An injury offered to God, ...attributing to Him that which is not agreeable to His nature.

15 "Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. 16 And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death. 17'Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death. 18 Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal.

- Notice that on the heels of committing blasphemy, God then addresses the matter of one committing murder. Why are these together?

- I believe it's because when one is blasphemous, he also becomes murderous. Again, to blaspheme someone means to; "speak evil."

- In other words, when you speak evil of God, you assassinate the character of God. The same is true when we are spoken evil of.

"No ordinary punishment could meet the despiser's case: he must die. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, and as the offender had done despite to that blessed name, he must be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy. We should be unfaithful if we held out even the slightest hope of eternal life to those who despise the name of Jesus. ...No other end is decreed for a blasphemer of 'the Name' than death, swift and terrible."

Charles Spurgeon

19 'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him --20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. 21 And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death. 22 You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the LORD your God.'" 23 Then Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and they took outside the camp him who had cursed, and stoned him with stones. So the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses.

- This eye for eye command was intended to be for their restraint, not their retribution. In other words, I want both eyes for one eye.

- The Lord took this to the next level when He talks about this command here in Leviticus, and it's found in Matthew's gospel 5:38-42.

Matthew 5:38-42 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. NIV

- Now how does this chapter dealing with the Menorah, the Showbread, and the death penalty for the sin of blasphemy apply to me?

- By way of application, I'll answer that, this way: "The Menorah "lights" my way to the Lord, Who is the bread of life eternally.

- When I enter into that saving relationship with God, I am saved from the death penalty of sin by the "Name" or nature of God.

1. LIGHT FROM GOD – ETERNALLY (VERSES 1-4)

2. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD - PERSONALLY (VERSES 5-9)

3. NATURE OF GOD - REVERENTIALLY (VERSES 10-23)